

MINUTES  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF YORK

Adjourned Meeting  
March 11, 2004

7:00 p.m.

Meeting Convened. An Adjourned Meeting of the York County Board of Supervisors was called to order at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 11, 2004, in the East Room, York Hall, by Chairman Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr.

Attendance. The following members of the Board of Supervisors were present: Walter C. Zarembo, Sheila S. Noll, Kenneth L. Bowman, James S. Burgett, and Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr.

Also in attendance were James O. McReynolds, County Administrator; J. Mark Carter, Assistant County Administrator; and James E. Barnett, County Attorney.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2005 BUDGET

Mr. McReynolds made a brief presentation explaining the proposed revenues the County can expect to receive in FY2005 and the expenditures included in the proposed budget.

Chairman Shepperd welcomed the audience to the public hearings, and asked everyone to adhere to the 3-minute time limit. He then called to order a public hearing on the proposed Fiscal Year 2005 budget which was duly advertised as required by law.

Mrs. Corinne Garland, Executive Director of Child Development Resources (CDR), stated she was present to take the opportunity to thank the Board of Supervisors for its support of the community's children between birth and 3 years old through funding for the programs offered by CDR. She indicated the CDR programs prepare children to enter school ready to meet their full potential. Mrs. Garland stated the Board's support of these programs is an investment in the future of the County.

Ms. Margaret Rowe, 101 Hodges Cove Road, stated she has lived in her present home all her life, or 76 years, and now it seems like the County wants her to move because she cannot afford to pay the taxes. She indicated it seems like the Board does not want old people or young people to live in the county. She stated she has always been able to pay her taxes, but she cannot afford to work anymore. The County assessed her property that is across the road from an expensive development, and she gets their garbage. Ms. Rowe stated she does not want to move, but she cannot afford to live in the county. She asked the Board to think about the poor people in the County. Ms. Rowe mentioned that one of the nicest things the County has done with her money is the Senior Center.

Mr. Mark Flockhart, 107 Quartermarsh Drive, spoke regarding the assessment, stating his land assessment went up 17 percent two years ago and this year 53 percent. He indicated his house went up 22 percent. Seniors do not have any place to go. He noted he has a half-acre lot that he uses for a garden that is assessed at \$63,000. He stated if he sold it to a family with five children, the School Board would have to have \$40,000 more in the budget to pay for the kids to go to school. Mr. Flockhart spoke of several inequities in the assessments.

Mr. Robert Keynton, 110 Quartermarsh Drive, complimented the preceding speakers, noting the taxpayers expected a 10 percent increase in assessments, and a lot of the reaction is a consequence of sticker shock. He noted he selected 30 samples from his immediate neighborhood, and of them only one lot came anywhere near the 10 percent figure. His went up 43 percent, and others went up 50 percent. Mr. Keynton stated this is all well and good if the tax rate compensates for the assessment. He stated he came up with a tax rate of 66 cents per \$100 that represents a revenue neutral tax rate. He expressed his hope that the budget was generated before Mr. McReynolds found the extra \$10 million.

Mr. John Yeates, 1005 Wormley Creek Drive, protested the assessment and the way it was done. He stated he has two lots, one with a seawall destroyed by Isabel, yet the property increased in value by 70 percent. He indicated the assessment on his house was increased from \$60,000 to over \$230,000.

Mrs. Edna Haggerty, 403 Timberline Loop, presented the Board members with a petition requesting that the Board consider a \$25,000 homestead exemption for all senior citizens of York County. She noted the assessment on her property has increased over \$30,000 in two years or less. She stated that at the last work session the Board spoke of the possibility of a 4-cent or 7-cent decrease to the tax rate, yet she asked the Board to consider a homestead exemption for the senior citizens as well. Until then, she stated the seniors ask for the 7-cent reduction. Mrs. Haggerty stated the seniors of York County need the Board's help and support so they can enjoy the time they have left to live where they choose to live.

Mr. James Thomas 104 York Point Drive, stated he has been in York County since 1990, and his assessment has gone up 169 percent since then. He noted that Mrs. Haggerty spoke of breaks for senior citizens, and he agreed with her recommendation. He stated these are exorbitant increases for seniors when they are on fixed income, and it will drive them out of their homes. Mr. Thomas also questioned the need for 26 new employees, and stated he would like to see breakdown.

Mr. Marvin Burgess, 130 Mill Lane, talked about unnecessary tax increases and advocated cutting property taxes to last year's total with no tax increase. He asked the Board not to increase the size of government, but instead cut 10 positions; put publishing and school bus operations on contract. He stated York citizens are hurting since Hurricane Isabel, and they need relief. Many citizens only have their property and their social security. He asked the Board to downsize the York bureaucracy, and cut the \$24 million on the Yorktown project. He asked the Board not to be a rubber stamp in spending.

Mrs. Barbara Zeno, 110 Ironmonger Lane, stated she has a home on the water, and her assessment went up 200 percent. She noted there were inequities in the assessments that were not done through any specific rules. She stated her property is smaller and older than a property down the road that is over an acre, and hers has been assessed 235,000 when the other one just sold for 275,000. Mrs. Zeno stated every lot cannot be painted with the same brush, that all waterfront property is not the same.

Ms. Lynne Christensen, Executive Director of the Heritage Humane Society noted that at the Board's work session she requested the County's participation in a capital program for the animal shelter. The Human Society has asked for a contribution of 12.5 percent of the projected cost of the new facility, and this is the projected proportion for District 1 based on animal intake data. She spoke of increases in intakes from York County of 17 percent in the last two years. Ms. Christensen stated York County residents rely on the Heritage Humane Society, and it will offer complete animal care for District 1 without restriction of condition or number of animals. She stated a public/private partnership is the way to go, and she asked that the Board with them in building the new shelter.

Ms. Martha McCartney, President of the Heritage Humane Society, thanked the Board for the opportunity to work with York County over the last several years, and indicated they look forward to working with the County in the future.

Mr. W. E. Sivertson, 205 Dogwood Court, stated the Board needed to seriously examine what is going on regarding the reassessment process. The impact on the elderly will be devastating since many of them are on fixed incomes. He noted he has watched this process with the Board unfold on TV, and he stated he did not envy the Board its job; but the solution is not more taxes, but cutting the budget. Mr. Sivertson stated the \$24 million going into Yorktown could be put on hold. The assessments are exorbitant; no one he knows of has seen a 12.4 percent increase in their income. Mr. Sivertson stated the elderly built this county and do not want to sell their homes just because they cannot afford to pay their taxes, and he asked the Board to find a way to fix this situation.

Mr. George W. Brooks, 103 Sylvia Drive, provided statistics of what has happened to him personally with his real property, and stated he has experienced a 104 percent increase, and his personal property went up 19 percent. He stated his annuity has gone up only 8 percent. He indicated he felt there was a misunderstanding concerning who lives on waterfront property. There are eight people on Sylvia drive, with two retired civil servants, one daughter of a bank manager, two retired shipyard employees, two medical families, and one contractor. He stated five-eighths of those people are retired and on fixed incomes, and there is no way they can live in the environment the Board has tried to create over the years. He stated the only way he can benefit from his property is if someone else owns it. Mr. Brooks also stated it seems to him that if the County needs additional taxes, the Board needs to find a reasonable tax base that involves everyone. He noted there are some people who deliberately own nothing so they do not have to pay taxes.

Mr. E. A. Brummer, 108 Oyster Cove Road, stated he bought his existing residence on the Poquoson River in 1971 and paid \$55,000 for it, and the 2004 assessment lists it at \$535,000. He noted that before he retired 24 years ago, he considered what his income would be and decided if the cost of living inched up gradually he would be in good shape. He stated he did not count on what the taxes would do to him. Taxes used one month's worth of my net annual income. Mr. Brummer stated he was glad to read the Board was considering adjusting the tax rate. He stated he did a simple calculation to determine what the tax rate would have to be to keep his taxes the same, and it would have to go down to 37 cents. He also noted he was glad to read that the Board has raised the threshold for the elderly in paying their taxes.

Mr. Ken Pierpont, 24 Cedar Point Crescent, stated the Board listened to the citizens but did not hear them. He stated the Board heard the staff who want to enhance their own resumes. The staff's agenda is to raise the size and scope of their responsibilities, which also leads to salary increases. He stated residential growth in recent years has not been accompanied by the same growth in industrial and business which provides the tax base for services for increased population. The needed revenues come from increased real estate assessments. Mr. Pierpont stated he lives on a small tributary, Hunter's Creek, and has a three foot channel, but today there is nothing but mud flats and it is not possible to get a boat in there any more, yet his lot assessment was increased 60 percent.

Mr. Aaron Zeno, 110 Ironmonger Lane, stated he is one of the unfortunates who live on the water and who paid dearly during Hurricane Isabel. He stated he runs a business in Norfolk and travels there every day. When faced with increasing costs of health insurance, etc., he noted he has not done what is proposed with the County budget. He stated his company has become a lean mean machine, and have cut back on expenses. He stated he does not have someone who makes the coffee every day, and he does not provide the perks he used like no bonuses during the past five years. He stated the Board proposed to spend \$24 million for waterfront beautification when people are suffering. He stated the Board of Supervisors is insensitive.

Mr. J. W. Speigle, 120 Three Point Court, noted the Daily Press told people to expect a 10 percent increase in assessments, and stated he felt the Board must have had some input with the paper as to where they originally got this information. Mr. Speigle stated he feels without a doubt the Board is not doing the citizens right with the increase proposed. He indicated he knows the department heads want raises, but they should not be at his expense.

Ms. Sarah Sager, representing the Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport, Manager of Marketing and Public Affairs, spoke of the proposed funding for the Blue Ribbon Commission in the proposed budget, and of other community support of the airport. She indicated that 2003 was a record year for the airport, and she spoke of other programs that the airport was pursuing for the future with the help of community and local government support.

Mrs. Pam Pouchot, 103 Kimberly Court, stated the proposed budget calls for 29 new employees and how it would equate to one employee for every 90 residents. She questioned the necessity for the new positions and suggested that the Board consider hiring part-time workers with no benefits. She stated the enhancement program is a waste of money, and the Zweibrucken Exchange program is a nice vacation for kids who do not even take German. Mrs. Pouchot

suggested the Board stop providing money to other communities and keep it in the County. She expressed her support of the dirt street program, and stated she would put the rest of her concerns about the proposed budget in writing.

Ms. Caren Schumacher, 119 Elizabeth Harrison Lane, Executive Director of the Williamsburg Land Conservancy, thanked the Board of Supervisors for its past support to the historic triangle, and expressed appreciation for the line item in the proposed budget; although she asked the Board to meet the Conservancy's original funding request. She noted the Conservancy has been able to work more closely with York County on the corridor enhancement program through Mr. Carter, and she spoke of other programs and projects of the Conservancy that benefit citizens of York County.

Mr. Joseph K. Taylor, 109 Marlbank Drive, stated everyone needs to recognize that some of the increases are costs that have been kicked from Richmond and Washington down to the county level, and there is nothing that can be done about it. Mr. Taylor addressed several areas of the budget where he questioned the increased amounts. He suggested tapping the General Fund balance of \$16 million to take care of things that have to be funded. Mr. Taylor asked the Board three questions: Is the \$2 surcharge included in the revenue estimate and what is it projected to generate? Will the County get the full two-thirds of the excess court fees back from Richmond; and if not, what can be done to make it happen? Are the local shares of the revenues from the non-categorical aid from the state mandated by law, does the County get them; and if not, what does the Board propose to do to get them?

Mr. Bob Winstead, 125 Land Grant Road, stated his assessment is about \$90 per month more based on the new assessment. He stated he does not use County services as much as some people do, but he does not begrudge paying taxes. The house next to him just sold for \$300,000, but their assessment was \$400,000. Mr. Winstead stated he bought his property for \$40,000, and he spent \$70,000 to build the house. He asked the Board to remember that the County doesn't have any money; the County spends the citizens' money.

Mr. Fred W. Schaumburg, 112 Quartermarsh Drive, stated he was in the 50 percent increase category in his real estate assessment. He indicated he did not think the citizens would be successful in getting the attention of this Board to do anything drastic which is needed. He spoke of other localities that have been sued over the taxes or have eliminated taxes, noting they have taken drastic action.

Mr. John Wylam, 115 Jacobs Run, President of Jacobs Springs Homeowners Association, stated there are people in their community on fixed income as well as those with children. He applauded the Board for the way it has controlled growth in the County and raised the quality of life. The property values going up is a reality; and as in other communities where the assessments have gone up drastically, he expressed his hope that the Board will help the citizens regulate growth and make sure they have a viable community that they can all live in. Mr. Wylam asked the Board to exercise fiscal constraint as well as considering the actual tax rate, and focus on the new people coming in the County.

Ms. Carrie W. Curtis, 2801 Denbigh Boulevard, stated that during the last assessment her property tax was doubled, but it turned out to be a clerical error. She stated this time she thinks it must be deliberate. She expressed her concern that one of her fields is now worth 400 times what it was worth last month. She stated she reminds herself every so often that her elected officials are her advocates and not her adversaries, but it was hard to get that message in the front of her mind when she opened the assessment envelopes. Ms. Curtis encouraged the Board to do something to ameliorate the situation.

Mr. Clyde Hoey, representing the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce (VPCC), stated the same real estate increases are going on in the other five localities he has visited this year. He thanked the Board for its support of the VPCC and for participating in the SeaFest last fall. The VPCC has helped 18 business in York County this year with financial planning, and last year it handled over 85,000 phone requests for the Peninsula and its business area. Direct counseling of 686 business across the Virginia Peninsula took place. Mr. Hoey also noted that a new magazine would be coming out for people relocating to the Peninsula, and York County has a very good write up. He stated it will be placed in tourist centers for better exposure.

Mr. Eugene Doucette, 536 Timberline Loop, stated he lives in Rainbrook Villas, and everyone has given the Board a lovely picture of the community. He stated it is good, but there are many flaws that need to be corrected and should have been corrected before his house was turned over to us. Mr. Doucette spoke of the different problems with the new units that have not been corrected, but nothing is being done.

Ms. Charlotte Schrader, 112 E. Branch Road, wondered why when the budget increase is only 12 percent for next year, the assessment increases are so much more. She stated she did not understand the discrepancy, and wondered whether or not the corporations in the county are paying their fair share. She stated York County is a lovely place in which to live, but she also thinks the County wastes a lot of money. She indicated the Board needs to revise its attitude about spending; instead of looking for more gadgets to buy, the Board should be cutting back. Ms. Schrader spoke of the frills that need to be reviewed, and she asked the Board to think in terms of stringency instead of extravagance.

There being no one else present who wished to speak concerning the proposed FY2005 Budget, Chairman Shepperd closed the public hearing.

#### PROPOSED 2004 TAX RATES

Chairman Shepperd then called to order a public hearing on proposed ordinance No. 04-3 that was duly advertised as required by law and is entitled:

AN ORDINANCE TO IMPOSE TAX LEVIES UPON TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY, UPON MACHINERY AND TOOLS, UPON MOBILE HOMES, AND UPON REAL ESTATE FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2003, AND TO PRORATE TAXES ON MOBILE HOMES

Mr. John Pandolf, 101 Ironmonger Lane, stated he was a little shocked about the accountability for the York County bureaucracy to assume they have to raise taxes when they should be looking at accountability and sensitivity. He indicated he knows how hard it is to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel, and there are still some people who are still waiting for repairs, but he hopes the Board thinks that the young people are the investment in the future. Mr. Pandolf stated the assessors should have had some way of looking at properties that were damaged by the hurricane.

Mrs. Pam Pouchot, 103 Kimberly Court, stated assessments in her neighborhood went up from 29 to 41 percent. She suggested the Board place a cap on the amount an assessment can increase; and when the house is sold, tax the owner on it then. Mrs. Pouchot stated she gets no benefit unless she sells her property or take out a loan on it. She also noted that when the elderly move out because they do not have a choice, young people with children will take their place and increase the need for services.

Mr. Bill Muntean, 119 York Point Drive, spoke of the increase of real estate tax revenues that is a 21 percent increase over the previous assessment. He stated it looks like if the Board could take 20 percent out of the revenue line in the budget and keep a revenue neutral tax bill.

Mr. Jay Dispirito, 103 Melody Lane, stated he feels everyone is missing the issue of the budget. The Board needs to control it. If the County were a business, it would be laughed out of business. If the Board came in with a base line of a 1.5 increase for inflation and 2-3 percent in real growth, it would be a more realistic budget, and they could then drop the \$.86 to whatever rate it would require. Mr. Dispirito stated the issue is the budget and not the assessment. The Board must get the bureaucracy under control and reduce the rate to an acceptable one to cover the expenditures. He stated there is no way 12 percent is realistic in the real world, and he feels the budget was built to cover assessments.

There being no one else present who wished to speak regarding the subject ordinance, Chairman Shepperd closed the public hearing.

March 11, 2004

OTHER COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE PROPOSED FY2005 BUDGET AND 2004 TAX RATES

The following are comments received from the Budget Hotline and via email on the proposed budget and tax rates:

March 8, 2004 (Email)

“While I applaud your efforts to generate more revenue so the county can spend more, increasing taxes is not the way to do it. By increasing taxes on property and business owners, you increase their burden to pay as well as cause those people and business to see locations which are less of a tax burden. This issue isn’t to raise taxes to pay for benefits, but to lower taxes to create business as well as reducing spending by the county, state, and federal government. I am avidly opposed to any tax increase you are proposing. I’ve seen my home appraisal rise twice since I purchased my home in Jun 00 approximately 25%, and my taxes increase at that same rate. While I wish I could be there for the meeting on Thursday, other commitments do not allow me to participate; however, please take this as my opposition to your proposed tax increase. Taxing is the sign of an oppressive government.”

Michael R. Schroer  
206 Blackberry Bend  
Yorktown, VA 23693  
757-766-7950

March 10, 2004 (Budget Hotline)

“This is Joann Zacrutick at 124 Kenneth Drive. I am for lowering the rate for taxes. We are overextended due to the damage by the hurricane. My home was almost wiped out. This has been traumatic to a lot of citizens. We need to have a break this year.”

March 10, 2004 (Budget Hotline)

“Hi, this is Ms. Cherry on Goodwin Neck Road. My real estate assessment increased by \$30,000. My Social Security is not any more than \$20.00 a month in addition to what we were getting last year. It would not hurt to increase the exemption amount.”

Meeting Adjourned. At 8:39 p.m. Chairman Shepperd declared the meeting adjourned sine die.

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James O. McReynolds, Clerk  
York County Board of Supervisors

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Thomas G. Shepperd, Chairman  
York County Board of Supervisors